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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2018

TAGS: BO EU PHUM PREL SW

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED ON BELARUS: SWEDEN SUPPORTS
EU-U.S. UNITY, BUT WANTS TO ENGAGE BELARUS

REF: STATE 30007

Classified By: Polcouns Casey Christensen for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On March 27 poloff delivered reftel demarche on EU support for the U.S. to the current to Balkan and Caucuses Desk Officer Anna Hamarlund Blixt. She said Sweden is in line with the USG that political prisoners, including Kazulin, should be released unconditionally and permanently. Sweden shares the USG's belief that US-EU must present a unified front towards Belarus, Blixt said, citing last week's EU Heads of Mission demarche to the Belarussian Foreign Minister, which expressed solidarity with the U.S. Sweden advocates limited engagement with the Belarussian Government and seeks to steer the EU Commission dialogue away from its focus on sanctions and isolation.

¶2. (C) Sweden is one of the largest donors to Belarus and is seeking to increase its aid. Unlike the EU Commission, according to Blixt, the Government of Sweden targets all levels and sectors of the country. Sweden's approach entails bilateral cooperation with the current government at the vice and local ministerial levels, as well as with civil society and opposition groups. Due to this approach the Belarussian Government has, according to Blixt, given Sweden broader access to the country and the ability to expose a large number of potential "agents of change" to Western democratic values. Sweden advocates limited engagement with the Belarussian Government and seeks to steer the EU Commission dialogue away from its focus on sanctions and isolation.

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